

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

EPL Plant Management Enhancement Activity – Health Spouts for tapping in a sugarbush with Buckets

Health Spouts with Buckets

This enhancement encourages the use of ‘health spouts’ for tapping maple trees that are 5/16” or smaller and using the live circumference of each tree to determine the number of these health spouts per tree.

Benefits

After a hole is drilled into a tree to be tapped, the sap coming out of that hole will run dry within approximately six weeks. Therefore, new holes need to be drilled into producing trees every sugaring season. The size of the hole being drilled into the tree is dependent on the size of the spout being tapped or pushed into the tree. The larger the hole, the larger the wound to the tree. An operator cannot drill into the same wound area from year to year because the wounded area becomes nonfunctional due to the scar tissue that is formed. Therefore, it is healthier for the tree to drill smaller holes into it so that wounds are smaller and as a result, more area can be utilized for drilling from year to year. By using a health spout, the operator can drill a smaller hole into the tree than they would if they were using a more standard spout, which has a larger diameter than the health spout.

Equally important are the number of holes drilled into a tree per season. The more holes, the more wounds, leading to increased nonfunctional drilling areas to utilize from season to season. That’s why, in addition to using health spouts, it is important to also drill holes for these health spouts depending on the circumference of the tree.

Criteria for Health Spouts for tapping in a sugarbush with tubing

Health Spouts must be 5/16” or less in diameter

<i>Size of tree – 10”-17.9” diameter (36”-54” circumference)</i>	<i>1 Spout/tree</i>
<i>≥18” diameter (≥ 55” circumference)</i>	<i>2 Spouts/tree</i>

References

Wilmot, T.R., Perkins, T.D., Stowe, B., van den Berg, A.K. “Comparison of the “Small” Spout with the Traditional 7/16” Spout. 2007, Maple Syrup Digest

Buzzell, George L. “Tapping Guidelines...An Update.” Vermont Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation, March 2001.